



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF ATHLETIC DIRECTORS, INC.

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Supportive Testimony for:

HB 5486 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE ASSAULT OF SPORTS OFFICIALS

My name is Fred Balsamo I am Wallingford resident and I am the executive director of Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors, which represents the athletic directors in 188 high school and 150 middle school athletic programs across the state.

Sport activities have increased tremendously and there are more youth involved in athletic competition than ever before. In Connecticut we have over 125,000 athletes competing in our high schools and it is the responsibility of the sport official to control, regulate, keep order and enforce the rules of the game. Very often spectators, athletes and coaches may not agree with the decision of a sports official and because of the emotional nature of competition and because there are many more parents, athletes and coaches at an athletic contest than there are officials, it puts them in a very vulnerable position. It is becoming an all too common sight of the unreasonable parent needing to be restrained because their fury escalates to an uncontrollable level. We have seen athletes embolden to challenge a rule and confront an official with disrespect and with great anger. In a close excitable game the sport official becomes a convenient target for the losing coach who needs someone to blame.

Keep in mind that sport officials travel to and from the game unescorted, enter the contest and while doing their job they have their backs turned defenseless to a huge crowd of spectators. Also, in many youth sport situations the officials are very often a high school student working for the local recreation department and the parents and coaches are much bigger, older and stronger than the student.

The sports official is the authoritative figure in all athletic contests and unfortunately we are now living in a society where people challenge authority all too often. It is for this reason the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors wholeheartedly supports the passing of H.B. 5486.

Sincerely,

Fred Balsamo

Fred Balsamo, CMAA